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ABSTRACT

This paper is a survey of school-to-work transition issues as they have developed in Europe. It contains discussion about the activities, research, and programs of each of four important international organizations, with particular stress on the period after 1975. These organizations are the European Community, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe, and the Nordic Council. Topics examined variously under the four organizations include defining the transition from school to work, difficulties in the transition, proposed transition programs, linked work and training, education for sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds, preventive work in the school system, compulsory education, upper secondary education, higher education, new studies, and objectives of preparation for work. A summary and conclusions are appended. (CT)

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Information Series No. 229

FROM SCHOOL TO WORK:

A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

written by

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The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
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1981

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is one of sixteen clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the National Institute of Education. One of the functions of the Clearinghouse is to interpret the literature that is entered into the ERIC data base. This paper should be of interest to vocational education teachers and administrators, career education personnel, comprehensive employment and training programs staff, and educational policymakers.

The profession is indebted to Beatrice B. Reubens for her scholarship in the preparation of this paper. Dr. Reubens has been doing comparative studies on transition and youth employment programs under Rockefeller Foundation sponsorship. Recognition also is due William C. Bingham, Rutgers University; Edwin L. Herr, Pennsylvania State University; and James Watkins, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, for their critical review of the manuscript prior to its final revision and publication. Susan Imel, Assistant Director at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, coordinated the publication's development.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is a survey of school-to-work transition issues as they have developed in Europe. It contains discussion about the activities, research, and programs of each of four important international organizations, with particular stress on the period after 1975. These organizations are the European Community, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe, and the Nordic Council. Topics examined variously under the four organizations include defining the transition from school to work, difficulties in the transition, proposed transition programs, linked work and training, education for sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds, preventive work in the school system, compulsory education, upper secondary education, higher education, new studies, and objectives of preparation for work. A summary and conclusions are appended.

Literature relating to the topic of school to work transition can be found in the ERIC system under the following descriptors: Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Vocational Education; *On the Job Training; Program Development; *Compulsory Education; *International Organizations; School Districts; *Education Work Relationship; *Educational Development; Student Programs; and Educational Research. Asterisks indicate descriptors having particular relevance.

INTRODUCTION

The industrialized market economy countries of Western Europe and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) experienced a sharp change around 1975 in the focus and content of their analysis and programs dealing with the transition from school to work. The cause of the shift was the onset of a prolonged period of elevated youth unemployment. Currently, these countries cannot foresee when the adverse labor market conditions for youth will be reversed.

Youth unemployment has, therefore, taken a central role in transition research and programs that were initiated after 1975. This situation is in contrast to the pre-1975 period when an assumption could be made that full employment, only temporarily disturbed by brief recession, was the norm. Even the few European countries whose youth unemployment did not rise markedly in the seventies have been affected by the altered situation in the other countries, inasmuch as discussion of the transition in the fortunate nations emphasizes the reasons why they suffer less youth unemployment than their neighbors. In the resulting focus on unemployed youth, the earlier concentration of transition studies and programs on good occupational choice, the quality of jobs, educational and vocational guidance, and related subjects has diminished. Also, the view that all young people require assistance with the transition has been replaced by a concern with those most likely to become unemployed. Some examples of the changed focus are Grimond (1979), Magnussen (1977), and Ball and Ball (1979).

While exceptions can be found to the general absorption with the problems of unemployed youth in national literature and program planning on the transition, it is accurate to distinguish between the pre- and post-1975 periods. One example among many is provided by a paper prepared by the Australian Council on Educational Research and delivered at a conference on Australian youth held at Canberra in February 1981. The paper includes a statement that "...high level of youth unemployment disrupted the policies and practices that had evolved in this country to provide for a relatively smooth transition from school to work and to adult life." It is implied in this paper that youth unemployment is the core of transition problems and that young people had few transition problems before the rise in youth unemployment.

A broader perspective on the transition can be obtained by examining or observing the international agencies, especially the European Community (EC) in Brussels, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, the Council of Europe (CE) in Strasbourg, and the Nordic Council (NC) in Oslo and Copenhagen. These agencies have taken a position of leadership and innovation on the transition from school to work. Without neglecting youth unemployment, these organizations have attempted to look beyond the immediate period of high youth unemployment to broader and more persistent issues and programmatic approaches to the transition from school to work.

After a brief survey of the issues, this paper contains discussion about the activities, research, and programs of each of these four important international organizations, stressing the recent period after 1975 since Reubens (1976, 1977 and 1979) has provided an analysis of the earlier period in a large number of countries.

TRANSITION ISSUES

A few basic questions arise about the nature of work in the phrase "transition from school to work". Some researchers and policymakers have no trouble with the definition of "work;" they assume that the nature of work changes slowly and that tomorrow's work world will be much like today's. Opposed to them are two groups. The first believes that jobs will differ radically in the period ahead, making it necessary to inform and prepare young people who may be expecting an unchanged situation. The second group, influenced by the long recession, feels that youth must be prepared for a life in which initial and later unemployment, part-time jobs, nontraditional enterprises, and volunteer and nonmarket activity may be as important as the ordinary jobs their predecessors obtained. Finally, other analysts ask whether a completely changed "world of work," stressing human values, should not be placed before young people as something for which they should strive.

The transition involves both the period before young people leave school and after they start work. Determination of the starting age and termination age for inclusion in programs and research is one of the key issues on which individuals, agencies, governments, and international organizations may legitimately differ. Whether the transition is a sudden transfer from school to work or a gradual process of establishment in the adult labor force is another topic of discussion. It also is a subject of dispute whether young people perceive school as a sheltering environment and the work world as harsh and unfeeling, as is postulated in much of the research.

Some analysts and programs direct their attention wholly or largely to groups "at risk," variously defined, while others consider that all youth need assistance in the transition, albeit of differing types and amounts. Transition programs generally are located in the schools or in the work place, but overlaps of various kinds are feasible and desirable, leading to problems of control and cooperation. Because of divisions in sources of program initiation, funding, supervision, and evaluation, it is difficult to construct and operate comprehensive transition programs. Finally, the training and staffing of many such programs have proved unsatisfactory.

The sections to follow review the recent activities of four international agencies that have a major interest in the transition from school to work. These are the European Community, the Nordic Council, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Council of Europe. There is a considerable overlap in these agencies' membership among European nations, but only Denmark belongs to all four.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Unlike the other international agencies discussed here, the European Community (EC), known also as the Common Market, has the power to establish common policies for member governments in designated areas. The Social Fund, created under the Treaty of Rome of 1957, gave the then-multiple European Communities a mechanism and funds with which to influence members' policies on issues such as unemployment and the transition from school to work.

Six countries, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, were the original members of separate communities for iron and steel, atomic energy, and economic affairs. A merger treaty fused the three communities into one and strengthened its executive and legislative apparatus. Three new north European members, Denmark, Great Britain, and Ireland were added. Currently, membership, on somewhat restricted terms, is being extended to southern European countries, of which Greece has been the first to join. The population of the ten members is about 270 million.

The executive body, the Commission, is located in Brussels, while the statistical and publications offices are in Luxembourg and a related agency, the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, operates from West Berlin. The European Parliament has held its meetings in various cities while it searches for a permanent home.

As has been the case in individual countries and in other international organizations, the sudden surge in youth unemployment triggered investigations and activity on the transition from school to work in the EC. In February 1976, the Council of Ministers of Education passed a resolution on an action program in education that called for the establishment of an Education Committee, composed of representatives of member nations and the Commission, and the production of a report by this committee on measures to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from school to work. Each member country subsequently transmitted a report on this subject to the Education Committee, which submitted an overall report to the Council of the European Communities and the ministers of education of member states at the end of November 1976 (EC 1976a, 1976b). The report was adopted in December 1976 and an action program was initiated (EC 1976c).

Defining the Transition from School to Work

In its report the Education Committee made the point that previous "periods of full employment did not show so acutely the necessity to help young people through this important period of transition, which is now generally accepted as beginning at the age of thirteen when the first decisions are made that have implications for later occupational choices" (EC 1976c, p. 15). The Committee also stressed that

> finding employment is only the first step: making sure of congenial and suitable employment, adjusting to it, finding satisfaction in it and learning how to progress in a career are quite as important parts of the process of transition. Young people have as great a need to learn how to cope with these aspects of working life when a booming economy offers them a wide choice of employment opportunities as when economic recession holds the threat of unemployment over them. (EC 1976c, p. 15)

These explicit statements and the stress on preventive measures differentiate the concerns of the Education Committee from those of other parts of the Commission that simultaneously were developing studies and programs on youth unemployment. At the same time, the Education Committee limited itself to the responsibilities of the educational system in the preparation for work and the transition from school to work, leaving to other offices of the Community, especially the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, such subjects as the assistance in the transition required by young workers from employers and others.

Difficulties in the Transition

According to the background analysis, the chief difficulties in the transition are unemployment or the risk of unemployment, restricted choice of occupation owing to a lack of vocational education and training opportunities, and a mismatch between the character of occupations available and the individual's qualifications and aspirations. Structural and other influences also were identified as reducing the likelihood that young people would find a job and stay in it.

The analysis includes the suggestion that long-term decline in some branches of the economy, increasing capital intensiveness, more sophisticated technical equipment on the factory floor, and the fast changing demands of qualifications create qualitative and quantitative imbalances between the demands on, and the openings in, the labor market. This affects the employment chances of young people, especially if priority is given to protecting the jobs of mature workers or those with family ties. In addition, evidence from some member states indicated that an unwillingness or inability to move deters young people from applying for existing job vacancies away from the place where they live. The analysis concluded that the current systems of education did not provide an adequate response to the fast-changing situation confronting youth and that these systems did not prepare young people sufficiently to meet the difficulties of the transition (EC 1976c, p. 36).

The Committee's analysis showed that some groups of young people are more likely than others to have difficulty during the transition. These groups were identified in five categories:

1. The inadequately qualified—because of a lack of vocational education or training or inappropriate or overly specific training

2. Females—due to higher unemployment rates, restricted access to occupations, limited educational preparation and aspirations

3. Young people from disadvantaged regions—due to limited employment opportunities at home and inadequate mobility

4. Migrants (from another country)—because of lower educational standards and additional language and cultural difficulties that restrict their ability to compete in the job market

5. Handicapped—because physically and mentally disabled youth have special difficulties in the transition

Proposed Transition Program

Based on the report of the Education Committee, which also reviewed the implications for education and training of the problems of the transition and the measures actually provided by the education services of member countries to improve the preparation and training for working life, the Council of Ministers of Education decided on a series of measures to be undertaken by member nations individually and by the Community as a whole (EC 1976c, pp. 9-11).

In developing national policies to improve the transition, member states were advised to pay particular attention to the following measures suggested by the Education Committee: curricula and teaching methods to provide appropriate preparation for work; closer links between general education and vocational training; a system of continuing educational and vocational guidance; continuing education and training opportunities especially for young people who leave compulsory school with insufficient attainment; compensatory educational strategies for young people most at risk in changing employment conditions; initial and continuing training of teachers in relevant aspects of the transition; improved collection and dissemination of information about young people; and stronger consultation and coordination between educational and vocational guidance services and training and placement services. Periodic comparison of national experience through the Educational Committee was recommended (EC 1976c, pp. 9-10).

The four-year action program for the Community itself called for a series of measures, complementary to national initiatives, to be devised in 1977 and implemented from 1978-1980. Five main areas of activity were prescribed:

1. Pilot projects and studies should be implemented to assist in the evaluation and development of national policies in the following priority areas: educational and training needs of those who encounter problems on leaving the educational system; poor motivation among young people in the areas of education and work; aid for special groups (equal opportunities for girls, assistance to migrants, and better chances for the physically and mentally handicapped); a continuing process of guidance and counseling, with particular regard to collaboration between those responsible for education, guidance, training, and placement; cooperation between the education and employment sectors to improve vocational preparation in the final years of compulsory schooling; and improvement of initial and inservice teacher training.

2. A report analyzing the experience of member nations in the improved coordination of educational and other planning for continuing education at the end of compulsory school should be prepared.

3. Study visits for specialists in vocational education and guidance, and workshops for teachers and trainers of teachers concerning the transition, should be organized, possibly inviting participation by representatives of employers and workers.

The two remaining items concern efforts within the Community offices to improve the data, knowledge, and comparability of national information on the various aspects of youth in relation to the transition. Finally, the Education Committee was asked to draw up a report on measures taken and results achieved within member nations and at the Community level.

Because only five pilot projects actually were underway at the start of the 1978-79 school year, the Council of Ministers of Education agreed to extend financial aid until 1981/82 so that a

full three-year program could be assessed. An annual budget of 1.6 million pounds was provided. At the beginning of 1980, twenty-nine pilot projects were underway, covering several hundred educational establishments and were likely to involve about ten thousand young people over the three-year period. A final assessment of all five main action areas delineated by the Council of Ministers of Education in December 1976 will not be available until 1983 or later, depending on the ultimate life of the project administered by the Commission in Brussels.

A report on pilot projects on the transition from school to work in Great Britain indicates the type of operations conducted. Under the supervision of Professor Alan Little of Goldsmith's College of the University of London, a series of pilot projects is being carried out with national and local assessors assigned to each subproject. Industrial training units to aid the mentally subnormal are being evaluated. Also, disabled school-leavers in Mid-Glamorgan in South Wales are being followed up as they enter the local labor market, and results will be compared with studies of school-leavers in two other areas. In Bradford, England, a city with a large Asian population, the pilot project launched a "Language, People and Work" course for Asian school-leavers who were without jobs or places in colleges of further education. In the Inner London Educational Authority participants in the pilot project were involved in evaluating a special bridging course between the schools and the colleges of further education. The Sheffield pilot project aims to maximize the resources of the Inner London Educational Authority for the benefit of disadvantaged pupils in all of the city's schools through curriculum development, increased use of external agencies, and staff development (Little and Varlaam 1980).

An interim report on the pilot projects was delivered in March 1980 (EC 1980a). Written by the outside group selected by the Commission to evaluate the projects, the report begins with a discussion of the difficulties encountered in the transition, both in a general and specific context.

Part 2 contains descriptions of promising actions to improve the preparation for transition in fulltime compulsory education through the use of the world outside the school; changes in learning/teaching method; staff-student relationships and curriculum content; and actions taken to improve the status and self-esteem of potential "unqualified school-leavers." Illustrations from pilot projects are used to elaborate on these themes. The second main division concerns promising actions after compulsory education to improve the transition. Again, the projects are used to illustrate some general points. The pilot projects have not been assessed in terms of how close they have come to their original aims, how useful they seem, how they compare with similar non-pilot programs, and how replicable the pilot projects are. The report acknowledges a need to consider evidence from non-pilot programs.

The final section identifies promising approaches, such as work experience, and discusses the full range and force of the constraints likely to impede wider implementation. A general constraint on wide-scale implementation is its cost. Specific constraints, for example, on making full use of the outside world as a major resource are: legal and administrative restrictions on insuring pupils in work experience; the inability of existing certification and assessment systems to take account of and accredit such learning forms; lack of understanding by teachers of the outside world; resistance of schools to change; absence of mechanisms to link schools to the outside world; and resistance by parents to change.

Calling for a comprehensive, overall policy regarding the transition, the interim report notes the failures of a piecemeal approach. To be effective such policies would need to coordinate educational measures with noneducational; combine resources and sectors of education; prepare for unemployment as well as for work as a part of adult life; allow a gradual instead of an abrupt transition through flexible combinations of training and education; and establish a coordinating organizational network to make such policies effective. Further areas, not touched by the pilot projects, were suggested for additional study.

In planning for the final phase of the pilot projects in 1981-82, guidelines by the Commission's technical experts suggested that it was important to disseminate ideas and outcomes of the pilot projects not only among educators but also among such groups as parents, trade unionists, and employers and officials in the human resource services. Comprehensive documentation and a planned process of dissemination and debate on ideas and issues arising from the pilot projects were urged.

The European Social Fund, through its special financial assistance to EC member countries that propose suitable programs to aid young unemployed people, has played a role in programs to improve the transition from school to work.

An important development within the Commission of the EC in 1981 was the consolidation of the directorates of employment, social affairs, and education into a single directorate and the installation of a new Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, and Education. It is hoped that a more integrated approach to programs dealing with the education-work nexus will result. Success depends in part on the ability and willingness of member nations to coordinate their own activities in these spheres. Officials at EC foresee an increased emphasis on the problems of handicapped and young females as well as on the difficulties of the transition for rural youth.

Linked Work and Training

In addition to these efforts on the transition from school to work, some of the activities of the EC's European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, established in Berlin in 1975, are important. Conferences and country reports on the relation between youth unemployment and vocational training have established a particular sphere of this group (EC 1977a, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1978e, 1979a). A recommendation by the Commission in 1977 on vocational preparation, not binding on member nations, also led to activities in this area by the training center in Berlin (EC 1978d).

Another directorate of the EC in Brussels that was concerned with youth unemployment and measures to deal with it also made contributions in its reports on the transition from school to work. Analysis of the problem, suggestions about competencies needed by young people to enter and hold jobs, and other related findings complemented the work being done directly on the transition.

In 1979 a new element was added to the EC concern with the transition. Moving beyond its earlier focus on young people at school, the meeting of heads of state in March 1979 asked the Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs to study linked work and training systems for young people with jobs or in youth unemployment programs. At its May meeting, the Council of Ministers asked the Commission to make proposals for work and training for young people as a part of an overall policy to share the available volume of work among a larger number of young people (EC 1980b, p. 72).

Acting on these instructions and an additional expression of interest from the Consultative Committee for Vocational Training, the Commission proposed a linked system of work and training. The Commission submitted to the Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs a draft resolution that, calling attention to the advisability of reducing the gaps between education, training, and working life, recommended a period of at least six months during which a young person newly entering the labor market would be able to combine training with practical work experience. Three kinds of young people were designated as especially suited to programs linking work and training: those undergoing apprenticeships or training courses, those in jobs without vocational training, and young job seekers engaged in special programs such as work-training contracts (EC 1980b, p. 74, p. 78).

The following guidelines were proposed for action by member states:

1. *Content and Concept of "Alternance"*. Member countries will encourage the development of effective links between training and experience gained at the work place. This linking implies on the one hand the establishment of coordinated programs, and on the other, structures allowing a close cooperation between those responsible at the work place (employers and unions) and those responsible for training (public authorities, chambers of commerce, and so forth).

Programs should be drawn up on a modular basis to ensure systematic progress. They should take into account the need to offer a training base broad enough to meet the demands of technical developments and of future changes in the work of the trainees; they should be planned in relation to the particular characteristics of the category of young persons for which they are targeted. A special effort should be made to develop apprenticeship or training fomulae for jobs in the tertiary sector.

In the case of the apprenticeships and of training-employment contracts, at least one-fifth of the overall training-employment programs should, in principle, be devoted to training outside the workplace.

2. *Control and Accreditation*. The training programs should be approved and evaluated by the authorities responsible for vocational training. The levels of competence achieved should be recognized by certificates and facilitate access to further training.

These authorities should also ensure that equivalences are established between the certificates obtained through the different forms of alternate training and those obtained through full-time training in order to promote transfer between the different branches of training.

3. *Remuneration and Financial Support*. Member states will see to it that the remuneration or allowances associated with the different systems of linked work and training are established at appropriate levels, especially in relation to unemployment benefits and minimum wage standards (whether legally determined or by collective agreement) and that effective financial encouragement is provided in order to permit young persons—especially those employed but without any training—to participate in recognized training programs.

The financial costs resulting from the implementation of linked work and training should be decided between the enterprise and the collectivity according to the arrangements made in each member state.

4. *Status and Working Conditions of Trainees*. Minimum standards should be defined for the different systems of linked work and training either in the framework of collective agreements or by the public authorities after consultation with representatives of employers, workers, and training bodies.

In the case of employment-training contracts, member states should, as needed, make the necessary arrangements so that the changes resulting from the social security payments do not result in an undue penalization of the enterprise where they are working.

For employed young persons without any training, member states will favor the implementation of legislation or of collective agreements that will allow these young persons to have training leave.

The following actions by the Council were recommended in order to facilitate the implementation of the resolution:

- It invites the Commission to submit proposals on the use of the European Social Fund to aid the efforts of member states to develop linked work and training systems during the period of entry into working life.

- It invites the authorities responsible for the implementation of this resolution to establish cooperation in order to encourage the exchange of experience and to help resolve the issues raised by the resolution.

- It invites the Commission to follow the progress made in implementing this resolution and shall draw up a report during 1981 (EC 1980b, p. 78).

On December 18, 1979 the Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs adopted a resolution that accepted the main points suggested by the Commission in its draft resolution, but made some significant changes (EC 1980b, pp. 80-81). In the guidelines for member states, the Council changed the original suggestion that at least one-fifth of each individual's overall time should be given to training outside the work place in favor of a statement that a "suitable minimum period" for such training should be designated. The Commission's call for a special effort to develop apprenticeships and training in the tertiary sector was recast to ask for a broadened range of occupations offering linked work and training. Other Commission specifics on sharing of costs, consulting representatives of employers, workers, and training bodies, and training leave were omitted in the Council resolution.

In its guidelines for the Community, the Council proposed that the European Social Fund should be tapped only for small-scale experimental projects to which member states contributed also. The Commission was instructed to monitor the application of the resolution in member states in order to promote harmonious developments, give technical support, and foster the exchange of experience, and to make a report to the Council in 1982 on the application of this resolution in member countries (EC 1980b, p. 81).

A review was made in 1979 by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training of the extent to which member nations had established comprehensive opportunities involving a linkage of periods of work and training. In Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, "a highly homogeneous and extensive system of education in the sense of alternance ... already exists," although not every quantitative and qualitative standard implied in the resolution has been met. But in Italy, France, Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom, "an inadequate level of opportunity" is offered, in spite of "a range of model experiments, regional or local initiatives, or even short-term economic measures, which seek to combine the system of formal education . . . with periods of vocational training or practical experience" (EC 1980b, pp. 2-3).

Thus, the Resolution of 1979 initiated a program that may have an impact in each member country, if it is implemented thoroughly. The report in 1982 should show how much has been accomplished in the brief period of two years and how much more remains to be done.

NORDIC COUNCIL

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, under the Nordic Cultural Agreement, effective from January 1972, seek to amplify and intensify cultural cooperation between the signatory countries in order to promote a sense of cultural community among Nordic peoples and to increase the combined effect of the countries' undertakings in the fields of education, scientific research and other cultural activities. Member countries of the Nordic Council also belong to the Council of Europe and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, but only Denmark is a member of the European Community. The supreme decision-making body for governmental collaboration is the Nordic Council of Ministers, whose work spans all fields of national life, with the exception of foreign and security policies. Membership in the Council of Ministers varies according to the nature of the questions it intends to consider. In the field of education, scientific research and culture, for example, the Nordic Council consists of the ministers of education and culture of the five countries.

Coordinating and executive functions are carried out for general matters by the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Oslo, and, for areas specified in the Cultural Agreement, by the secretariat for Nordic Cultural Cooperation in Copenhagen, Denmark. This secretariat is responsible for drafting the common Nordic budget for cultural activities, including some forty permanent institutions and projects within the three main areas, and it is the administrative and research center for activities, such as those on the transition from school to work, financed by the joint budget for Nordic Cultural Cooperation.

The five countries also maintain a Nordic Labor Market Committee (NAUT) under the Nordic Council of Ministers of Labor. Located in Oslo, Norway, the committee and its subcommittees, as well as the secretariat, concentrate their research and activities more directly on youth unemployment and labor market problems than on the transition. Nevertheless, some of their research and projects also have dealt with the transition from school to work; the operations of both the Copenhagen and Oslo centers of the Nordic Council are therefore relevant.

Activity by the Nordic Council on the transition from school to work has taken the form of conferences, research projects, reports by experts, pilot studies, and other methods. Since the Scandinavian countries are among the most advanced in educational planning and in programs concerning the transition from school to work, their activities, as a group and singly, are of particular interest. The Youth Guarantee, in which every young person under a certain age (nineteen or twenty) is guaranteed either a job or an educational or training course, originated in the Nordic countries.

Education for Sixteen- to Nineteen-Year-Olds

A series of conferences arranged by the secretariat for Nordic Cultural Cooperation dealt with education for sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds. Vocational education and training were emphasized, since the Council of Ministers felt that one of the main reasons for youth unemployment was that a large group of young people started work without having had any occupational skill education after finishing compulsory school, usually at sixteen years of age.

At the first conference there were three study groups, each considering and reporting on a subject related to the transition (NC 1977a). Subsequent reports in the series considered secondary education and possible lines of reform. Provision for the group "at risk," or the

residual group, was designated as a subject for additional cooperative effort as was the relation between the school, society, and the economy (NC 1978a). Another conference report (NC 1978b) reviewed research and innovative projects concerning education of sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds, with particular emphasis on the risk-prone group, those who do not take at least a two-year course after completing compulsory education. Priorities for future research and innovation were established. The last conference report (NC 1978c) was in part devoted to problems in the working environment and how the education of young people should deal with the subject.

Still another report in this series (NC 1980a; Frøyland) is concerned with the relationship between youth education and the world of work. Two questions were posed: Do schools prepare young people for work adequately, and to what degree and in what ways should the schools cooperate with the world of work in educating or training youth? With an eye toward developments in the future, the report asks to what extent schools should impart practical skills that qualify young people for tasks outside the paid work force. Such tasks include the protection of one's own health; care for children, sick, and elderly persons; cultivation, preparation, and preserving food; and maintaining and repairing one's home, bicycle, car, and so forth. The author asserts that the relation between the content of schooling and an individual's spare-time activities in later years should become an important subject. Overall, the author fears that the educational system lags behind the upheavals in society and working life and that the gap between the school and society will continue to widen.

More direct and explicit treatment of the transition from school to work is found in the Nordic Council's study of youth unemployment. One of the earliest expressions of concern by the Nordic Council about the transition from school to working life appeared in a report on youth unemployment. Initiated in 1975, the project called for three parts: preventive work in the school system, improvement of the transition from school to working life, and measures for unemployed youth. Since the purpose of the project was to exchange information, discuss experiences, and further develop measures to combat youth unemployment in the four member nations that had marked youth unemployment (Iceland has little), attention centered on the actual situation in the countries rather than on theoretical discussion (NC 1977b).

Preventive Work in the School System

All four Nordic countries had introduced the nine-year comprehensive school in the course of the sixties and seventies. Sweden initiated a combined upper-secondary school that replaced the former gymnasium and full-time vocational education. Finland started a similar system in 1977. Denmark has introduced a new postcompulsory educational system (EFG) that includes vocational training in manufacturing, crafts, and commercial firms. The report noted that rapid changes in society during the last decades have made young people's preparation for choosing an occupation more difficult. Urbanization and a concentration of jobs in more closed environments as well as technological improvements in production processes have caused most youth to have limited practical experience on which to base their future choice of occupation or livelihood. Simultaneously, the demand for theoretical education has increased in most fields. Education has been expanded and become less vocationally-oriented, and thus it is more remote from working life and the practical realities of the job (NC 1977b).

The authorities have attempted to compensate for this lack of familiarity with working life and community life through vocational guidance and social studies programs in the comprehensive school. These attempts, however, have not been sufficiently systematic to provide all pupils with realistic impressions of industries, occupations, and society. At the same time, young people obtain unsystematic information on certain social conditions and occupations, primarily through the mass media, which may distort what takes place in working life.

Criticism has been expressed about the information on working life and society provided by the schools. The critics maintain that the information is too theoretical, uneven in quality, limited in scope, and insufficiently based on actual conditions in working life. It is their goal to have working life play a greater part in the system of instruction and to have lessons provide realistic guidance to both sexes on working life and community.

Basically, the Nordic Council's project aimed to evaluate measures to improve the information to pupils on working life and society, with a view to reducing unemployment among young people. Even though the project group believed that this objective was important, it was not possible, within the time limit established for the project, to evaluate this aspect. The project group also felt that the part of the project relating to preventive measures in the school system should be dealt with as a separate project in which people from the education sector would also participate in the evaluation (NC 1977b).

Problems of the Transition

In Sweden, a 1975 report indicated that the largest group "at risk" were those who left the comprehensive school before completion, those who did not apply to or begin secondary school, those who were rejected by secondary schools or could not begin their chosen training, and those who dropped out of secondary schools. These groups included, among others, young people with different types of handicaps and immigrant youth.

A relatively small share of pupils are so dissatisfied with school that they leave the compulsory comprehensive school before they have completed it. According to information available in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, about 1 percent of the pupils in the upper grades in the comprehensive school leave or are exempted from compulsory school attendance. In Norway there is considerable geographical variation in the number who drop out of the comprehensive school. It is accepted that a far larger group of pupils may be equally unhappy in school, even though they complete the required number of years.

A lack of school motivation or so-called school boredom is a widespread reason that is given when pupils want to leave the comprehensive school before completion and by those who do not elect to continue schooling after completing comprehensive school. According to surveys in Denmark, financial reasons, conflicts with teachers, and offers of training positions also are given as reasons for leaving school. It was found that early school-leavers often changed schools, attended special classes, were frequently absent from school, came from homes with a low social status, and were mostly the youngest children in the family. Scholastic inadequacies and social background were also pointed out as characteristic factors in Norway, but the way of organizing schools and the stiff requirements for the acquisition of theoretical knowledge also had prominent effects on the rate of school-leavers in that country.

After completing compulsory school, a considerable number of young people do not have a clear picture of what they wish to do in the future. This uncertainty lasts, for some, until their early twenties. In the Norwegian youth survey in 1975, close to half of the seventeen- to nineteen-year-olds did not have definite plans for a future occupation. Many have unrealistic vocational plans, concentrating on a few popular occupations and showing a strong influence by the traditional division of jobs in the labor market according to sex.

No survey gives an unequivocal answer to the question of the extent to which young people, whether employed or unemployed, desire more education. While a survey in Denmark in 1975 showed that a majority of young people wanted more education, the Norwegian youth survey,

carried out in the same year, indicated that only a small percentage of young people had applied to schools but had not been admitted. In the Danish survey it was assumed that most of the young people had not applied for admission to school because they knew in advance that they did not have a chance, either because they were too young or were not sufficiently qualified academically.

In Sweden there is an increasing tendency among young people to rate job experience highly. It has become more customary, both after the end of compulsory school and after the upper secondary school, for pupils to postpone their further education for a time. One of the factors contributing to this trend is the new rule for admission to higher education that counts job experience as a qualification equal to prior education. There also is a resistance among some youth to training courses within the framework of the school system; they feel too adult for school and have greater respect for employment where training takes place on the job. They also value the receipt of wages during their training.

As might be expected, young people's attitudes towards education in academic subjects fluctuate with the conditions on the labor market. In periods when it has been difficult to obtain employment in those fields where a higher theoretical education is required, the interest in such education wanes, and there is also a reduced interest in employment-related theoretical studies at a lower level. The effects of altered labor market conditions on the education sector appear to be both stronger and more lasting than would be suggested by the labor market conditions themselves.

The report observes an increasing social consciousness among young people. Increased education and information through the mass media have provided a view of conditions in the society that young people of previous generations did not have. Some young people react against the competitive mentality that characterizes both school and working life, and against mass production and materialism in the society. It is uncertain to what extent this influences education and the choice of occupation (NC 1977b).

Transition Measures

The chief measures to ease the transition from school to working life in the four countries were summarized in a report issued by the Nordic Council (1977b).

Denmark

Since many of the difficulties faced by young people may be traced to faults and shortcomings in the educational system, in recent years a number of reforms in Danish education have been implemented. In addition to the fact that a more flexible education can be offered through the new vocational education system than through apprenticeship, it will be easier to adapt the number of places to the demand since capacity will be determined by the public sector and will not be dependent, as it was previously, on companies' willingness to invest in training. A further coordination of the education for sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds is being planned in order to eliminate the distinction between gymnasium and vocational education.

Special efforts should be made for those young people who do not proceed beyond the comprehensive school. For this residual group, which includes about 20-25 percent of sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds, officials were considering a system of instruction consisting of specially-organized short courses that are modules in a longer vocational training. The central committee

on youth unemployment suggested that resources should be available for more thorough individual vocational guidance, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils, at each school. Some municipalities already have initiated a youth officer scheme, where a teacher or advisor contacts all pupils twice a year during the first two to three years after completion of compulsory school.

Finland

A main objective in Finland in the short run is to expand vocational school capacity. Thus far, young people in many rural municipalities have not been able to obtain regular vocational education close to home due to the lack of capacity of the schools. The labor market authorities have proposed the introduction of an extra semester in the vocational course to consist of practical experience in firms. This measure could facilitate job placement and adjustment by new entrants to working life.

In the longer run, the authorities are planning educational reform of the intermediate school level with a view to instituting a broader and more flexible scheme with transfer possibilities between different types of schools. The gradual establishment of a liaison-teacher network in the vocational schools also is planned in order to improve contact between schools and working life. It is planned that work experience periods should be available to all pupils in comprehensive school.

Norway

A number of comprehensive schools have started to offer alternatives to classroom study, originally as a pedagogical measure for pupils who showed poor adjustment in school. Today, alternative training is accepted as an option with as full a value as an elective subject. Alternative education, linking the school more closely to working life, consists partly of expanded periods of practical training organized within the school. In part, alternative education consists of being placed in firms, vocational schools or seamen trainee courses, for one or two school days a week. In 1976 and 1977, experiments were initiated in some municipalities whereby pupils in the ninth grade of the comprehensive school could receive school credit for training in a firm for two school days a week. Still in effect today, the schools cooperate with employment offices, the social welfare offices, the labor inspectorate, and industry to provide this training. Organizations of employers and workers also participate.

Under the auspices of the local school authorities, experimental programs have been conducted to follow up pupils leaving the compulsory school, in particular those who are most likely to have employment problems. With a view to improving the contact with young people who do not apply to upper secondary schools or who are rejected or discontinue their education, the country's employment service is trying to concentrate the vocational guidance services on these groups. Based on cooperation between the labor market authorities and the educational authorities, an organized program has been developed to ensure contact between graduates of the comprehensive school and the employment service. According to this program the school is responsible for passing on information from the employment service to the pupils and for arranging possible contacts with the employment service. The employment service receives a list of pupils who do not apply to or are not accepted at upper secondary schools and contacts them to offer services.

The distribution of responsibility and forms of cooperation between schools, the employment service, and other bodies has been the subject of a major study that includes an evaluation of current vocational guidance activities and an analysis of future vocational guidance needs.

Sweden

An important measure is the establishment of special councils (SSA) in all municipalities of Sweden, as of July 1, 1977. The councils are composed of representatives of the school, the country's employment service, local government authorities, employers and trade unions. These liaison bodies have advisory and coordinating tasks with regard to the relationship of education to working life and measures to improve and professionalize the information provided in schools on working life. The SSA councils assess the educational and vocational orientation provided to youths who do not continue in upper secondary school after completing the comprehensive school.

It was decided to follow up all young people for up to two years after they left the comprehensive school. The responsibility for this follow-up is partly vested in the schools and partly in the Employment service. The aim of the program is to help young people find lasting employment or education that leads to such employment. Attempts have also been made to estimate how many pupils in the ninth grade of the comprehensive school will not be able to attend any school or to enter their chosen field in upper secondary school, and to give these pupils concentrated vocational guidance. Such activities were to be carried out in all Swedish municipalities beginning in 1977. For pupils in the ninth grade of the comprehensive school, "labor market days" are held. These include visits to the employment service so that pupils may be more familiar with the local labor market, with how to apply for employment, and so forth. An eight-week orientation course, study of vocational fields and working life, that includes theoretical orientation, guidance, and certain practice or study trips, is provided for upper secondary school pupils who have not applied for further education after the comprehensive school (NC 1977a).

Proposals

Proceeding from their review of country programs, the research project concluded with the following proposals for further action on the transition from school to work (NC 1977a):

- Society should enlarge its responsibility for young people in the transition from school to working life. A better follow-up of young people should be provided during the first two years after the completion of compulsory school.

- Liaison bodies for youth labor market problems should be established in each employment service district, with special personnel to handle day-to-day practical work. Follow-up and coordination should be established on the county level, and a central coordinating body should be set up.

- Measures for unemployed youths should cover normal employment periods as well as recessions, and should include both short-term and long-term measures. Target groups should be specified and measures should be tailored to the needs of such groups.

- Contacts between pupils and school personnel, on the one hand, and the employment service, on the other, should be improved. The school should be responsible for ensuring that all youth are given an opportunity to talk with a vocational counselor/placement officer who in turn should be able to offer varied kinds of assistance.

- Continuous short vocational courses, arranged by the employment service or the school, should be established. The project should be initiated to restore socially maladjusted youth to working and community life.

- A system should be devised and evaluated to provide continuous vocational orientation over a whole school year to youth who need such support.

- All those who wish to continue their education at a vocational school should be given the opportunity. This presupposes extensive vocational orientation and guidance aimed at making the choice of education as realistic as possible. There should be possibilities for young people under the age of twenty to be admitted to adult training courses organized by the employment service. Work experience should weigh more heavily than is the case today when applying for admission to various types of school/training. It is important to promote an equalization in the distribution of education and occupations between the sexes.

- Extra, created employment in individual jobs for youth in the central government, country, and municipal offices, and in private companies should be further developed, in consultation with employers and trade unions. Such work should be meaningful, offer a motivation for continued employment, and should be counted as credit towards further education and employment. Special efforts should be made to find such employment for young women, at the same time that efforts are made to encourage all young people to try nontraditional jobs. Recruitment of young people for such employment might be combined with paid leave of absence for adult workers who wish to obtain further training.

- The objectives of various schemes relating to practical vocational orientation, expanded job placement activities arranged by the school, the apprentice and trainee systems, and employment should be clarified with a view to future coordination and the establishment of priorities.

A later review made detailed proposals on vocational guidance, based on the conclusion that the service provided by the comprehensive school was too theoretical and that the cooperation between the school, employment service, and working life did not function in a satisfactory manner (NC 1979a).

ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the only one of the international agencies reviewed here that includes non-European countries as members, and it is the only one of the four agencies to which the United States belongs. OECD responds to the wishes of member countries in designing its program, and its conference reports are a synthesis of national opinion overlaid by OECD secretariat analysis. Member nations may use OECD reports as they choose, since OECD has no powers other than advisory. Much of what follows is based on studies in preparation at OECD.

OECD had an early start in consideration of the transition from school to work, antedating the great rise in youth unemployment in Europe and Australasia. From 1974 the work programs of both the Education Committee (composed of national representatives of education departments or ministries) and the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee (composed of national representatives of relevant department or ministries) have given greater attention to specific problems within the broad, general subject of the inter-relation between education and employment. Work on this subject began with a report on education and work prepared in 1974 by a group of experts, headed by Clark Kerr, former Chancellor of the University of California. This wide-ranging report, *Education and Working Life in Modern Society*, dealt with a large number of subjects and various age groups (OECD 1975, *OECD Observer* 1975). The report introduced the subject of the transition in a discussion of new opportunities available to young people through additional education-work options. Based on the observation that educational enrollment rates in a number of OECD countries had slowed in growth or become negative and that some American youth were showing a desire to start full-time work at sixteen, the report made several recommendations that relate to smoothing the transition from school to work, thus antedating similar proposals later made in other international agencies. The three main recommendations were as follows:

- The educational authorities should give incentives to industrial, commercial, and administrative enterprises, public and private, to formulate practical projects with pedagogical value on which young people in upper-secondary academic courses can work.

- Educational institutions could help young people acquire competence, rather than narrowly defined skills, by adopting as flexible an attitude as possible towards transfers between school, work, and social service. Whenever possible, courses should be organized on a modular structure.

- Governments should give employers more incentives to offer a wider range of opportunities to young people and to allow them to combine work and education. Minimum wage legislation might be reviewed. Social security contributions might be remitted during the first few months in a new job, provided the young people also participate in formal training.

As a result of the new interest in education and working life, OECD produced several other reports related to the transition from school to work—on entry to working life (OECD 1977a, 1977b), apprenticeship (OECD 1979a), and new options for the teenage group. It also held an intergovernmental meeting on vocational education and training (OECD 1980). Still further work proceeded from the deliberations of the High Level Conference on Youth Unemployment in 1977 and the Joint Working Party on Education and Working Life.

The latter, consisting of representatives of the Education Committee, the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee and the Governing Board of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, held several meetings in 1976 and 1977. The report of the Joint Working Party in April 1977 outlined selected major issues under a section dealing with the transition from education to working life.

Transition Problems and Programs

The problems of the transition to working life have some common elements that facilitate common objectives. One of the important common elements is the need of all young people to master the basic competencies required in working life, and often in other aspects of adult life. In addition, as educational levels advance, differences appear in the range of personal and technical competencies desired in those about to leave education. Necessary changes in curriculum cannot be made until empirical surveys are conducted to identify the specific competencies required at different educational levels, especially those that should be acquired during compulsory education (OECD 1977b). Other aspects of the transition also vary greatly according to the level of education and training. Different emphases in policies and combinations of measures therefore are required within each level.

Compulsory Education

A common, basic learning experience should be provided to all students in order to prepare them for everyday life. Improvements in the curricula should offer an introductory knowledge of the economy and the world of work, while delaying the provision of specific vocational instruction and counseling until age fifteen or later. Periods of work experience, fully integrated into the curriculum, are urged for pupils in compulsory school and periods of experience in work other than teaching are advocated for their teachers.

The problem for many young people who enter the labor market from compulsory education is that they can obtain jobs only in occupations or industries where turnover is high and jobs are unstable, leading to broken employment histories that bar access to more stable, career-type jobs. Opportunities to return to education under recurrent education schemes are, therefore, of great importance for those who do not proceed directly into upper secondary education.

Entry into the labor force is complicated in some countries by an usually large outflow from the schools at a time of year when the job market may be slack for seasonal or other reasons. A better distribution throughout the year of school leaving might improve the absorption process. Perhaps more important harmonization of laws regulating the minimum age of leaving school, the minimum age for obtaining employment, and the age for entry into government training programs would ease the transition in those countries where discordant provisions prevail.

Apprenticeship, as a combination of classroom instruction and practical experience, offers leavers from compulsory school a relatively smooth transition. But there is a need to review traditional apprenticeship systems in regard to their adequacy in providing sufficient skilled human resources and improving the quality of training, while shortening its duration in some countries, diminishing selectivity in choosing apprentices by sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic level, facilitating transfer to additional education, and promoting upward mobility in later careers.

Governments are urged to offer financial aid to enterprises to enlarge the number of young people in training-employment schemes of all types. Extension of the range of occupations under apprenticeship, new combinations of work and training, preapprenticeship courses, aid for youth with special difficulties, and possibly changes in the ages of entry and completion in apprenticeship also were cited as measures to improve the transition from school to work for early school-leavers.

According to the Joint Working Party, it is better to use resources to create jobs for young people than to make income transfers to unemployed youth, especially if the created or temporary jobs can lead to normal employment. Training may be required for both temporary and permanent jobs.

Upper Secondary Education

Since this level of education offers a more complete preparation for working life than is possible during compulsory education and since it is the stage at which social selection for later educational and employment opportunities occurs, the Joint Working Party considered the years of upper secondary education crucial to the economic and social objectives of both education and human resource policies. Extension of compulsory education beyond fifteen or sixteen years of age as currently imposed was not endorsed, although various actions to encourage voluntary continuance were supported. Compulsory part-time education and training after compulsory school was considered a significant option, whether in apprenticeship programs or in another form.

Upper secondary education in most member countries was seen as largely geared to transfer to higher education rather than preparation for working life, although large numbers of upper secondary students, whether dropouts or not, do not proceed to higher education. Major changes, therefore, are needed to make upper secondary education more directly relevant to working life. The principle should be accepted that education at upper secondary level should include sufficient vocational content to qualify all students to obtain a first job and also to enable them to continue to learn through formal instruction or from their own work experience. There should be a reorganization of education at this level to permit a greater diversification of studies with a view to enabling apparently general and vocational subjects to be studied at the same time.

Another change affects the certification that is awarded to upper secondary graduates. Certificates or diplomas should describe the content of subjects studied in order to indicate competencies. Employers' and workers' representatives could play a significant role in the design of curricula and certificates. Accreditation of training by enterprises for admission for higher technical and scientific education could be part of such a development.

Work experience during upper secondary education is desirable and should be arranged formally by the educational system in collaboration with employers. A goal would be to provide such structured work experience for virtually all of the students who will directly enter the labor force from upper secondary school. Follow-up of the experience should be part of the educational curriculum. In some countries legislation may be needed or existing laws may require amendment in order to establish work experience.

Higher Education

The problem identified by the Joint Working Party in regard to higher education was a growing disparity between the number of graduates and the limited employment opportunities, especially in the public sector, which absorbs a high proportion of graduates as teachers. Moreover, constraints on resources, the competing claims of other levels of education, and the concern in many countries with providing more equitable access to education within their societies set limits to the further expansion of general higher education, notwithstanding its vital contribution to economic development.

Diversification of higher education, particularly by the creation of new institutions of higher technical and vocational education, was suggested as a lower-cost alternative to traditional universities. More open access to higher technical and professional education might permit graduates from lower levels of vocational training to attend, reducing social disparities. Students in general higher education, especially in the fields that do not lead to employment, need more educational/employment counseling before beginning studies or entering the labor force. Work experience through part-time jobs, not necessarily related to studies, was advocated.

New Studies

Based on the analysis made by the Joint Working Party, its discussion of the available policy instruments and its call for research and assessment, and recommendations by the Intergovernmental Meeting on Vocational Education and Training in 1978, the work programs of OECD committees and secretariat in 1978-80 included major attention to issues related to the transition from school to work. One of the most significant was the report by a group of experts on the competencies needed in working life. Dividing the report into three main sections, the expert group specified the following list:

- Abilities and Techniques—reasoning, propensity for continuous learning, reading, writing, calculating, manual skills, and elementary technology
- Personal and Social Skills—social skills, work values, communicating (speaking and listening, knowledge of other languages, nonverbal communication, symbols), and health and safety
- Knowledge about Working Life—the world of work, finding a job, and survival and development in employment.

In order to facilitate the acquisition of these competencies by all young people, the expert group called on schools and employers to make major efforts along the following lines:

- Offer remedial education at an early age and make similar efforts to ensure that those who are slow to learn do not accumulate persistent handicaps.
- Establish a new balance between learning through doing and other, more traditional kinds of learning.
- Make additions to the curriculum on the labor market and coping with unemployment.
- Give special attention to the development of personal and social skills.

- Provide an introduction to the technological culture and young people to combine information, intellectual skills, technology, and manual operations.

- Skills that are not job specific should receive more emphasis in initial skill training in firms and in secondary school vocational education.

- Work experience programs for the hard-to-employ or the unemployed should give attention to the individual needs of participants for competencies.

- Teacher training should be altered and teachers should have more opportunities for direct experience in work other than teaching.

- Schools, employers, and trade unions should work more closely together to improve the curriculum and the preparation for work.

- Employers should identify their needs more clearly so that public programs can be designed to serve their interests as well as those of young people.

- Improved opportunities for young people to acquire a wide range of skills and experience is dependent, in the long term, on the progressive elimination of low skilled and unstable jobs. Such jobs and unemployment limit the role of employers in helping new entrants to the labor force further develop their competencies acquired in school.

A related report on information and counseling dealt in part with the role of these services in the transition from school to work. Stating that information and counseling were essential components for helping young people in the transition from school to work, the report noted that at present these services are more widely utilized by young people in the higher socioeconomic groups. An especially urgent need, therefore, is to provide information and advice to those who are likely to leave school at the end of compulsory education without qualifications. Improving the management of information and counseling services as well as their content is required in most countries. Professional training of counselors must be broadened and improved. Systematic evaluation of programs to provide information and counseling is essential to make more effective use of the available funds and improve the programs.

Review of Measures

Another important OECD activity has been to review the experience of member countries with various measures to ease the transition from education to working life. The purpose was to compare national experience, discuss the objectives of programs and criteria by which programs could be assessed and evaluated, and make tentative judgments about the effectiveness of programs, taking account of the constraints imposed by the recency of many measures and a tendency to alter their terms as they were implemented. The first review concerned work experience programs for young people who are hard to employ. Such measures are intended to operate through the normal working of the labor market and to make the young people in the program more competitive with other young people and with other age groups. Experience in most countries indicated that work experience did not reach the most disadvantaged new entrants. The development of programs operating through local level projects revealed the need for new management strategies. Many of the programs demonstrated the positive impact of practical work experience on the motivation of young people who lack formal educational qualifications. Such programs may wrongly exclude young adults. Some substitution of young people for other age groups probably occurred and may be inevitable.

The second review concerned measures relating to preparation in school for working life. A wide range of experimentation and innovation suggested that no clear agreement exists on the best ways of providing such preparation, in spite of some common elements. Classroom instruction and observation or exploration in a firm are often treated separately, but should be unified. Teaching of elementary manual skills and instruction about the world of work are the two main classroom approaches. Better preparation is a continuing need for all pupils and should not be seen merely as a response to the problem of unemployment among young people.

Next was the review of vocational education and training in secondary schools. Reforms of secondary education in a number of countries were found to have, among their varied objectives, attempts to ensure sufficient numbers of trained and qualified entrants to the labor market and to improve the readiness of young people for the world of work. Vocational education in schools prepares students for a group or family of occupations in most of the reporting countries, leaving to the employer to supplement this preparation with more specific on-the-job training. No consensus exists on the division of costs between government and employers. Some of the countries reported that the new forms of vocational education had improved the linkage between the schools, the labor market, and the wider community.

The fourth review involved apprenticeship and examined it as a measure in the transition from school to work. Conflicting objectives for the individual, the employer, and the economy and differences among countries in the organization and governance of apprenticeship result in varying assessments by governments. As a method of vocational training, apprenticeship is supplementary to or in competition with alternative training methods. In light of some of the criticism of apprenticeship, many countries have been changing apprenticeship in order to improve it. New methods of funding are being tried in order to share training costs equitably between employers who train and those who do not and to ensure an adequate supply of training places.

In all four reviews, the OECD made clear that assessment methods were quite undeveloped in member countries and that many of the decisions to enlarge, change, or terminate programs were based on hunch or common sense. A need for improved assessment methods and a sharing of national experience, assisted by OECD efforts, appeared to be a valid conclusion from each of the reviews of national measures to ease the transition.

A draft summary paper considers the separate reports in a more organized fashion. A restatement of the problems associated with the transition and their aggravation during the recent period points to demographic, economic, educational, technological, social, and political factors. In the second section there is a review of measures to improve the transition subdivided into preparation for adult life, including work during compulsory education; new departures in postcompulsory education to improve vocational preparation and training; measures for new entrants to the labor market; and special programs for low achievers and the hard-to-employ.

A critical review of the assessments governments have made of the various measures follows in part 3. The criteria suggested for assessing the transition measures, even if on a short-term basis, are as follows:

- Do the programs increase the probability of young people finding employment?
- Do they reduce job turnover among the young or improve the process of job search and selection?

- Do they reach a particular target group, i.e., low achievers, educationally disadvantaged, or the hardest to employ?
- Do they reduce disparities between different social groups in access to employment or training?
- Have they increased the status or prestige of vocational education, relative to general or academic secondary education?
- What are the attitudes of participants, teachers, and employers toward the measures?
- What are the costs of the programs, and how do they compare with alternative measures?

The mixed results reported are in part a function of the lack of clear-cut, well-accepted conclusions on these programs within countries. In addition, they reflect the fact that OECD considered only a partial representation of programs from a portion of the member countries and often had neither full nor most recent national research at hand.

On future policy, the draft summary report declares that measures to improve the transition from school to work need to be viewed as a coherent strategy, rather than as a series of short-term expedients. A continuing need is seen both for measures to help all young people prepare effectively for entry into working life and for measures to help the hard-core unemployed youth through carefully designed and targeted programs. Concluding that government measures to improve the transition thus far do not suggest a general panacea, the report points out that schools, enterprises, and labor market institutions have distinct roles and that young people need a range of environments for learning. They need coordination, rather than duplication, and the removal of barriers between various types of opportunity. The long-run issues in the improvement of the transition from school to work are the increased sharing of opportunities in society among youth and between youth and other age groups, as well as the long-run efficiency of the labor market, rather than the short-run mounting of rescue operations in response to youth unemployment.

Another part of OECD, the Center for Research in Educational Innovation, has also played a part in transition activities through its projects on the alternation of work and study, the educational response to the changing needs of young people, and the "youth guarantee." In the same way, the Action Program on Youth Employment under the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee has been examining relevant problems from the employment angle.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Because of its mandate and structure, the Council of Europe has concentrated on issues in the transition from school to work that relate primarily to the education system. The Council of Europe operates through official representation from member countries and holds periodic meetings of Ministers of Education, among others. The European Cultural Convention, which has been signed by twenty-three nations, led to the establishment of the Council for Cultural Co-operation under the aegis of the Council of Europe. The activities of the CCC provide the Council of Europe with a framework for action in a number of fields, one of which is education.

Up to the middle 1970s, the Council of Europe's activities concerned the expansion of education, reflecting the buoyant economies in member nations. With the slowdown in economic growth, it "became clear that the connection between learning and life, and especially between training and employment, was far from perfect" (Council of Europe 1980b, p. 3). New problems were seen and others, concealed during the expansionist period, became apparent. As the chief program advisor, Yves Deforge, put it:

> At first it was thought that the gap between supply and demand whether in quantity or quality, could be narrowed by improving career guidance and placement and encouraging mobility. But the wave of unemployment. . .would not be held back; and the most vulnerable were affected first (Council of Europe 1980b, p. 3).

In 1978 the Council of Europe, which earlier had been active in the fields of technical and vocational education and the expansion of the educational opportunities open to the sixteen- to nineteen-year-old group, decided to substitute specific studies of youth, among them surveys in ten European countries on preparation of young people for working life. These surveys were conducted as an important part of a project on the preparation for life, reflecting the belief of the chief adviser, Yves Deforge, that

> The most suitable type of education for preparing young people for life is a type of education at one with this world. . . developing vocational ability and life skills hand in hand. . . "Good" preparation for working life can and should show that it is, in itself, cultural. (Council of Europe 1980a, pp. 3,5)

The project on preparation for life, including preparation for working life, was to concern itself with young people in the two years before and about two to three years after the completion of compulsory education. The work plan called for a consolidated report by the expert, Yves Deforge. It was to be based on visits by committees to significant experimental schemes and additional reports from experts on four other aspects of the preparation project. General resolutions were to be submitted to a major international conference, and, if appropriate, recommendations would be made to member states of the Council of Europe. As of April 1981, neither the general resolutions nor the recommendations had been formulated. A large output has resulted directly from this project and several related Council studies have been published (see references under Council of Europe). The most significant document to date is the summary report prepared by Yves Deforge, the chief adviser (Council of Europe 1980b). While written on Deforge's own responsibilities, this document is an important indicator of the positions likely to emerge from the Council of Europe's project.

Analysis of the Problem

In setting forth the parameters of the problem of preparation for working life, Deforge was careful to emphasize developments within the educational system and in working life. He declared that as long as economic expansion p[illegible]sted, the work world had been able to absorb the "small fringe of rebellious, maladjusted or m[illegible]tally deficient students who increasingly come into the schools' orbit due to longer periods of compulsory education, adverse living conditions in large urban agglomerations, and dislocations in family ties" (Council of Europe 1980b, p. 3). But the soaring youth unemployment focused attention on this group at risk.

According to Deforge, the shortcomings of the schools, especially in serving the 20 to 30 percent of an age group who leave the system hating school and poorly qualified to succeed in the work world, can be identified as follows:

- The progressive educational concept of nondifferentiated, nonselective instruction, together with lengthened compulsory education, had resulted in defacto segregation, aiding many but harming a portion of the age group.

- The expansion of curricula and introduction of the subject approach in the intermediate cycle had benefited certain pupils, but reduced the role of the classroom teacher who constituted a vital reference point.

- Increased geographical mobility and heterogeneity of population had undermined the representative character of schools as microcommunities reflect society at large.

- Classification by the school system of those who do not conform had created ghettos of pupils.

In addition, there has been an enormous increase in the number of teachers with the result that many teachers did not have "true vocations," their average age had dropped, few had direct experience of working life, a greatly increased proportion of women had resulted in some types of teaching, teachers had lost social status, and the image of teaching as the route to social advancement had declined. However, there had been improvement in teacher training to offset concern about the reported developments.

Deforge also attributed the problem of the preparation of youth to the evolution of the system of production. Among the developments in the economy that have been adverse to the easy absorption of young people into working life have been the following:

- A relative decline in the handicraft section where the master, responsible for both training and education in the broad sense, was in constant control over his apprentices.

- An increase in the number of unskilled jobs which might, if there were no alternative, be considered suitable for some young people, but which have become so unpopular that they are normally automated or left to immigrant workers.

- An increase in the level of schooling required for most administrative jobs, supposedly justified by the increasingly technical nature of such posts.

- A rise in structural unemployment, since the number of jobs created in the service sector is insufficient to compensate for jobs lost in other sectors.

- A tendency to reject candidates for recruitment who do not offer qualifications and certificates, attitudes consistent with company ideology, etc. (Council of Europe 1980b, pp. 15-22, 32-33)

While Deforge shows no enthusiasm for the various short-term youth unemployment programs to cope with the overall imbalance in the labor market, he does not stipulate a basic alteration in the nature of the productive system as a prerequisite for an improved system of preparing young people for working life. He does, however, approve of the movement in Europe to foster small, autonomous, labor-intensive production units (Council of Europe 1980b, pp. 18-27).

Objectives of Preparation for Work

It is significant that Deforge's analysis does not deal specifically with deficiencies of the schools in the preparation for work. In fact, Deforge states that if the objectives are "to supply the productive system, according to its needs, with specialized workers, skilled workers, technicians and clerical staff for the tertiary sector all of whom believe in the ideal of production and consumption, then every learning system has achieved them" (Council of Europe 1980b, p. 47).

What Deforge sees as a good preparation for work is:

> one which gives young people an awareness of the general relevance of their intellectual activity above and beyond the concrete situations laid before them. . . .We want to produce self-reliant beings capable of affecting the course of events, as producer, educator, manager, responsible citizen, freed from stereotypes (so often denounced but ever-present), and it is not by means of lessons that these objectives will be achieved, but through the actual working of institutes themselves, and foremost among them, the school and those involved in it—teachers, pupils, parents and the community—self-reliance, responsibility, and respect for others are lived, not taught. (Council of Europe 1980b, pp. 47-48)

Suggested Programs

Deforge concludes with eight specific observations on structural elements in the educational system. These are based on observations he made in visits to ten countries to examine experimental programs to improve the preparation for working life.

1. Systems that, in the two or three years preceding the end of compulsory education, offer all young people a technological education (technical subjects, polytechnical education, manual and technical education, etc.) give them a better chance than systems that do not offer such education.

2. Systems that, in the two or three years preceding the end of compulsory education, take into account handicaps caused by a variety of factors, give these young people a better chance than systems which do not differentiate when the necessary staff and other resources are available.

3. Systems that, in the last year of compulsory education or the period immediately following, offer an intensive preprofessional course to young people who want one, or to those who are uninterested by school, give these young people better opportunities than systems that do not offer such possibilities. (Such courses go under a variety of names: preapprenticeship, preemployment courses.) The most common form of vocational training is an apprenticeship in which the interpersonal relationship between master and apprentice is created. The absence of such courses in the official education system has induced private organizations, other ministries and employers to set up substitute courses whose educational content sometimes leaves much to be desired. It is for these same young people that undesirable types of training that serve to perpetuate their socioeconomic status have been instituted.

4. Systems that, during and after compulsory education, provide guidance, a tutor system, and career education in which teachers participate, offer young people better opportunities than systems that do not provide such facilities or leave outsiders to provide counseling.

5. Systems that, immediately after compulsory education, have instituted a common core with technical options, or that assume that technically based training can be as cultural and general as any other forms of education, give young people better opportunities than systems that distribute them immediately among the various secondary courses. This is already done in some countries by means of a tenth year with a common core and options, and in others by means of short courses in working situations and work experience (such schemes may continue for an eleventh and twelfth year).

6. Vocational training systems that start with a year of basic occupational training (often full-time), followed by gradual specialization, seem to offer young people a better chance than systems that offer only specialized vocational training.

7. Systems that offer positive guidance, thereby reducing the flow of students towards academic courses and attract more people to vocational training in schools or schemes for school/work alternation, give young people better chances of promotion than systems that adopt the opposite policy. This reversal of the trend, taking place hand in hand with a change in social demand, is perceptible in some countries. Educational systems have yet to become fully aware of the trend and move with it in educational terms by fortifying and diversifying vocational instruction and by introducing innovations.

8. Systems that have a high capacity for innovation offer better opportunities to young people than those that do not. This is not so because of the content of any particular innovation, but because the pupils are involved in a process of change and forward movement which prefigures the attitude one would like them to have in their working lives.

Several of Deforge's comments in an earlier and briefer paper summarizing the visits to ten countries should be added to the list of recommendations already mentioned (Council of Europe 1980a). Deforge observed that the stereotype in the minds of parents, teachers, counselors and adults that considers vocational education as the poor relation in the educational system and an undesirable alternative has been rejected by large numbers of young people, including the academically able. There are two dangers in this development. If many young people start vocational education at the end of upper secondary school, there will be excessive costs of double education. (This remark refers to countries where most youth terminate general

education with compulsory school.) Second, if too many young people opt for vocational education/training in certain fields, for example, environment, ecology, or social work, it may be necessary to set quotas in order to avoid an oversupply.

Since national contacts with the international organizations, such as the European Community, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the OECD and the Council of Europe, have contributed substantially to raising the quality of vocational education and training, such contacts are valuable and should be strengthened.

Deforge reacted negatively to projects that create "cozy little ghettos" for certain young people, such as the 15 to 20 percent of those leaving compulsory education who are the rejects of the school system and are marked as failures. Projects that teach such young people to do "little, socially useful jobs" and "to be good" may become institutionalized, finally creating a market for such services by offering a supply of workers. Deforge notes that neither the education system nor society has responded to the challenge posed by this group.

In regard to females, Deforge maintains that the nature of jobs has become increasingly independent of the sex of the worker and that the major problem is the residue of social stereotyping among teachers and young females.

Deforge concluded by asking whether it is enough that a project dealing with preparation for working life should examine what is going on in and around schools. He answers that it is not. Such an examination "must also consider the relationship between that preparation for working life and society, the production system and employment" (Council of Europe 1980a, p. 13). It also ought to provide alternative suggestions for a society in which young people are happy to live. Thus, the Council of Europe has cast a wide net in establishing the relevant issues for the transition from school to work. It considers the usual programs, especially as the educational system provides them, directs attention to basic trends in the economy, (though giving little attention to specific activities employers might undertake), and raises questions about possible changes in the nature of society.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

International perspectives on the transition from school to work have been discussed in a review of the recent positions and activities of four international organizations. The country composition and concern with the problems of the transition in these four organizations make them most relevant for comparisons with the United States. The four organizations are the European Community, the Nordic Council, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Council of Europe.

The declarations on the transition by these international agencies cannot be taken as reliable guides to the actual state of the art in the individual countries which constitute the membership since, on the whole, the international agencies tend to be in advance of their members. A separate review of transition measures in individual countries would complement this review of the four main international organizations.

Views reported are an amalgam of country positions, secretariat influence, and contributions by advisers and outside experts. Due in part to the large overlap in the membership in the four organizations—several countries belong to three of them and Denmark is a member of all four—an anticipated similarity in analysis and prescription appears among the four. The least overlap in membership is found between the European Community (EC) and the Nordic Council (NC), which have somewhat greater influence over member country policy than do the other two organizations.

Some of the common emphases are as follows:

1. The special transition problems of early school-leavers—those who either drop out, fail to obtain credentials, or complete lower secondary education but go no further, either in academic education or vocational education/training

2. Inadequate preparation in the basic competencies required in working life

3. Insufficient acquaintance with the structure and organization of the work world

4. Too little or overspecialized vocational training, whether supplied by the educational or employment systems

5. Faults in all of the social institutions responsible for easing the transition of young people from school to work

In the span of five to six years during which the four organizations have actively engaged in programs related to the transition from school to work, some important common trends in thinking have become evident. While the analysis of the problems of the transition are not basically different from those advanced at the start, the passage of time and closer experience with case studies have given a more concrete shape to the statements.

A definite trend is the recent emphasis, especially by advisers and experts, on the problems in the transition created by the unfavorable economic environment and the possibility that traditional work may be available in the future to fewer and fewer young people and for more limited periods of their adult lives. This gloomy view is particularly European, but it also is visible as far away as Australia.

Finally, the most recent pronouncements give more attention to the practical difficulties and obstacles to devising and implementing comprehensive, effective transition measures for young people. Some disappointment with the type of programs instituted or with their execution is evident as the first assessment efforts appear. These are still tentative because of the newness of programs. The precise contours of future positions are now being worked out in the international organizations, each of which is likely to remain involved to some degree in trying to improve the transition from school to work.

An assessment of the relevance for the United States of the recent activities of the international agencies on the transition from school to work should recognize the important American leadership and early attention to the problems of disadvantaged groups of youth. All other countries and the international agencies are indebted to American experience for guidance in their own thinking about these problems, even when the precise characteristics of the groups involved are not identical to those emphasized in the United States.

However, the United States, along with other individual nations, has not taken seriously the contention of the international organizations that all young people face problems in the transition from school to work and require some assistance. This is a possible area for further American research and discussion.

Perhaps the greatest divergence of the international agencies from American views and policies on the transition occurs in relation to the content of upper secondary education. In their strong support for vocational education at the upper secondary level, especially if it can be raised to parity with general education, the four organizations and individual countries reflect prevailing European educational patterns and the high regard by employers for the products of upper secondary vocational education. In the United States, on the other hand, interviews with employers reveal that for entry jobs they do not wish to recruit young people with occupational skills imparted in vocational schools, but desire only adequate skill levels in communication, computation and comprehension, and satisfactory work attitudes and habits.

In view of the considerable dissatisfaction in the United States with both the general curriculum and vocational education in the high schools, it might be profitable to investigate some of the European vocational systems at the upper secondary level. More broadly, efforts to improve the transition from school to work in the United States can benefit from a continuous process of exchange of views and experience with other advanced industrialized countries and with the international organizations to which they belong.

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